



Habitat is where it's at!

March 2016



We hope you enjoy reading about the adventures of the **Green River Region** personnel as they work to *Conserve Wildlife and Serve People!*

Do you know which eye is your dominant or master eye when shooting?



Countryman and Albins teach fire-arms and proper shot placement to Kemmerer students.

Special dates and points of interest:

- 2016 HUNTING SEASON FINAL PUBLIC MEETING IN GREEN RIVER MARCH 21; WRITTEN COMMENTS DUE BY 5 PM MARCH 25.
- REGISTRATION PERIOD FOR NEW BLACK BEAR BAIT SITES BEGINS APRIL 1.
- DON'T HAVE A COMPUTER? EVERY REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE GAME AND FISH HAS A COMPUTER AT THE FRONT COUNTER FOR PUBLIC USE.
- DON'T HAVE YOUR HUNTER SAFETY CERTIFICATE? CHECK FOR UPCOMING COURSES ONLINE AT [HTTP://WGFD.WYO.GOV](http://wgfd.wyo.gov).
- LOST YOUR HUNTER EDUCATION CARD? YOU CAN PRINT AS MANY COPIES OF YOUR CARD AS YOU WANT, FOR FREE, AT THE WGFD WEBSITE.
- REMEMBER: YOU CAN BUY ALL YOUR HUNTING LICENSES, REQUIRED STAMPS AND MANY MORE PRODUCTS AT THE WGFD WEBSITE FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN COMPUTER!

Wyoming Game and Fish Southwest Access Yes Coordinator Andy Countryman helps a Kemmerer student learn which eye is his dominant, or master eye, to be more proficient when shooting at game. Countryman, Green River I&E Specialist Lucy Wold and volunteer Annemarie Albins conducted the hunter education class in Kemmerer for 24 students. The Green River Region is in need of hunter education instructors. For more information call 307-875-3223 and ask for Wold.

Grumpy moose relocated north of Kemmerer ~ Thanks to volunteers!



***Above, left to right back row: Officer Cory Stoof and volunteer Richard Falioni
left to right front row: Nick Roberts, "Grumpy Moose",
Josh Hager and Andy Countryman***



***Above left to right (rear row): Murph Roberts, Richard Falioni, Lori Roberts,
Front row: Officer Josh Hager and "Grumpy Moose".***



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Cokeville Game Warden Neil Hymas, (photographer and heavy lifter) Evanston Game Warden Nick Roberts and Kemmerer Access Yes Coordinator Andrew Countryman were able to tranquilize and relocate a cow moose in the town of Kemmerer. The officers were helped out by volunteers Murph and Lori Roberts, Richard and Mary Falioni, Kemmerer Police Officer Josh Hager and Lincoln County Sheriff Deputy Cory Stoof.
The cow moose had been hanging around Kemmerer and was behaving aggressively towards local people and dogs. The officers made a decision to tranquilize the moose and move her away from town. The moose was darted in Archie Neil Park in Kemmerer and relocated west of town.
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Rock Springs Game Warden Dave Hays (left) discusses proposed hunting season with Green River Wildlife Supervisor Steve DeCecco (center), Green River Wildlife Management Coordinator Mark Zornes (second from right) and Baggs Wildlife Biologist Tony Mong (right in ball cap).



Wyoming Game and Fish Department wildlife managers across the state gathered public input post-hunting season (January) and again in the spring (March) to ask how and or what the hunting seasons should be for the upcoming fall hunts. Green River personnel spent time informally discussing hunting seasons before drafting season proposals, using input from their constituents and from their own wildlife observations.

During the January post-hunting season meetings, in addition to information on local herds, meeting participants were also given a presentation on the Wyoming Range mule deer herd research by University of Wyoming researcher Samantha Dwinnell. Game and Fish personnel in the Jackson, Pinedale and Green River Regions will be asking the public for more input on the herd population objective for the Wyoming Range mule deer herd in the coming months.

There were five open houses and one final public meeting held in southwest Wyoming March 14 through March 21. Regional wildlife staff is hoping to hear from as many sportsmen as possible about the draft season proposals and they will be taking additional input towards developing 2016 hunting season proposals.

Written comments will be accepted through 5 p.m. on Friday March 25, at public meetings, or by mailing them to Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Regulations, 3030 Energy Lane, Casper, WY 82604 or online at <http://wgfd.wyo.gov>.

In general, pronghorn antelope seasons in the region will be mostly the same as 2015, with some increase in licenses where we are at or above objective, notably in hunt area 57. There will also be some increases in doe/fawn licenses where we are addressing ongoing damage or landowner concerns. **Deer seasons** will be mostly the same as 2015. There are some notable changes in hunt area 82, Baggs deer herd, proposing a significant increase in Type 6 doe/fawn licenses. The population is at objective and we need to stabilize growth through antlerless harvest.

Elk seasons will be mostly the same as 2015, but we are at or approaching objectives in some herds, so we are moderating the rate of antlerless harvest; notably in the West Green River elk herd where we are decreasing cow licenses and antlerless harvest on general license because the population is at objective now. In the Sierra Madre herd we are still reducing the population through antlerless harvest, but making some quota adjustments as well as changes to the general license seasons. **Moose hunting seasons** will be pretty conservative across all our areas with some reduction in licenses

Muley Fanatic banquet a success ~ Project WILD donations and workshop



(above) Kemmerer educators participated in the Project WILD activity "Oh Deer" at a March 12 workshop.



The Muley Fanatic Foundation's (MFF) Southwest Wyoming Chapter banquet was held Saturday March 5 at the Sweetwater County Events Complex.

"We gathered mule deer specimens from closed cases for a "Stop Poaching" display at the banquet," Green River Wildlife Supervisor Steve DeCecco said. "We were able to gather about 20 sets of antlers and mounts from about 15 cases across most of the State. Each specimen was displayed along with a short summary of the case details and court outcome."

"The MFF folks put together a nicely arranged Stop Poaching corner with our trailer and nicely done rack displays," DeCecco. "We also had some program promotion materials to give away. There was keen interest in the display from the banquet attendees. Before the dinner and fundraising event started, attendees milled around and read the stories and asked questions about big game violations and our efforts."

"Many of the seized big game heads will have a Interstate Game Tag placed on them and will be formally signed over to MFF for future events," DeCecco said. "In the region, we have a goal to help MFF with future displays and events. We have a very good partnership and they are committed to supporting our law enforcement and management programs."

The Southwest Wyoming Chapter of the Muley Fanatic Foundation donated \$1200 to *Wyoming Project WILD*.

Chapter Co-Chair and Project Advisory Committee Chair *Chris Steffen* presented Wyoming Project WILD Co-Coordinator Lucy Wold a check for \$1,200.00. (photo, left)

"We are really glad the Muley Fanatic Foundation was able to contribute and help Wyoming Project WILD," Steffen said.

Wyoming Project WILD also received a donation from *The Williams Companies INC* in December of 2015.

Project WILD is an international, interdisciplinary conservation and environmental education program emphasizing wildlife. *Project WILD* helps students of any age in developing awareness, knowledge, skills, and commitment to result in informed decisions, responsible behavior, and constructive actions concerning wildlife and the environment. Since its introduction in 1983 *more than one million educators* in the United States have participated in *Project WILD* workshops.

Lichen Toxicosis Likely Cause of Elk Deaths in the Red Desert ~ Do not pick up shed antlers until May 1



Photos: Andy Roosa, WGFD

Game Wardens Dave Hays and Andy Roosa responded to a call on March 8th about seven dead elk, east of Steamboat Mountain, in the Great Divide Basin of the Red Desert. After arriving at the scene, the game wardens inspected the elk carcasses, which appear to have died sometime between November and January.

"We also found an abundance of tumbleweed shield lichen in the area which has been found to be toxic to elk when ingested" Roosa said. "Numerous red urine stains in the soil were also noted, an indication that elk had ingested the toxic lichen. Unfortunately, the elk were too heavily scavenged and decomposed to collect any samples which would confirm lichen toxicosis."

Tumbleweed shield lichen is common in sagebrush habitats across the western U.S. The lichen causes long term and lasting muscle paralysis in affected elk, which appear alert, but are unable to stand. Lichen toxicosis itself is not deadly to elk, rather they likely succumb to predation, dehydration or starvation, as a result of being unable to move. It is unclear why elk eat the lichen. These incidents are sporadic and do not impact the overall elk population.

"This is not the first occurrence of elk deaths from lichen toxicosis in Wyoming," said Roosa. "In fact, during the winters of 2004 and 2008 combined, more than 500 elk died from lichen toxicosis in the Red Rim area. While the number of affected elk has not been anywhere near that high this year, Green River Region and Lander Region personnel have responded to a number of reports of paralyzed elk in the Red Desert this winter."

"A number of these cases were confirmed to be lichen toxicosis by the Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory," Roosa said. "Some of these cases, including this most recent one, have occurred further east than has been found in the past. Game and Fish personnel do not believe that these deaths are occurring at a level which will have any significant impact on the population of this elk herd."

"We are asking the public to report any elk carcasses or elk that appear to be sick or unable to stand. Please use caution and do not approach live elk or handle carcasses. Also, it is illegal to pick up shed antlers or horns west of the Continental Divide until May 1. If you do observe any elk carcasses or elk exhibiting abnormal behavior or have any questions, please call the Green River Regional Office at [307-875-3223](tel:307-875-3223) or the Stop Poaching Hotline at [1-877-943-3847](tel:1-877-943-3847)."



Cokeville Game Warden Neil Hymas received the photo of the coyote on the left. The coyote had mange and was taken by a predator hunter in January, north of Kemmerer. Hymas said that mange, or *Sarcoptic mange*, is a serious skin irritation caused by Sarcopes mites.

"It is also sometimes called scabies," Hymas added. "It can affect several mammals, but has been noticed in this area of the state in red fox and coyotes for the past several years. Severe infections can lead to the death of infected animals, especially during periods of cold weather. The mite is usually passed by physical contact or being in contact with a location that has been frequented by infected animals."



Evanston Game Warden Nick Roberts spent a considerable amount of time in February removing deceased deer fawns from area residences. "The Evanston area has had a fairly hard winter through the first part of February," Roberts said. "On some days, I would receive four or five calls about fawns who had died, probably from starvation or brutal weather, next to a house or in a hay stack. Livestock producers have also reported seeing lots of carcasses on traditional winter ranges. (photo left, center)

Warden Nick Roberts and Mountain View Game Warden Allen Deru issued citations to three Utah antler hunters collecting antlers on public lands in the Leroy area. "After discussing the legalities of antler hunting in Wyoming, both parties agreed that we should give the wintering deer as much space as possible," Roberts said.

"The antler hunters reported seeing approximately 20 deceased deer carcasses and several sickly looking deer in the fairly small area they covered," Roberts said. "Wintering wildlife do not have energy to waste avoiding antler hunters during late winter."



Illegally taken shed deer antlers seized by Roberts and Deru.

Viva Naughton and Sulphur Creek Reservoir fishing derbies



Evanston Game Warden Nick Roberts contacted and photographed many of the 154 anglers who showed up for the *Sulphur Creek Reservoir Ice Fishing Derby*. (photos above and right) Approximately 900 fish were caught, 50 of which were kept. The three largest fish were awarded with \$1,080, \$720 and \$360 respectively. More importantly, \$1400 was raised for the Shriner's Hospital for Children. Thanks to organizers Alicia and Chance Jenkins.

Cokeville Game Warden Neil Hymas took these fishing derby photos at the Lyons Club annual fishing derby held on Viva Naughton Reservoir on February 13. "I found these anglers really interesting because of the distance they traveled," Hymas said. "They drove down together, fished for Saturday and Sunday, and then were driving home. Just a simple fishing adventure."

Photo top, left, From left to right: Dan Fey, Kendrick, ID- 670 miles from home, Amber Rimel, Saint Maries, ID-740 miles from home, and Laith Hutcheson, Lewiston, ID- 635 miles from home.

"The fishing was fair to good with around 300 participants," Hymas said. "A few folks caught and released the tiger trout that were stocked the last two summers. They commented on the colorful tiger trout and praised the overall fisheries management on this drainage."



Office managers Sheila Watts (right) and Regina Dickson (left) have been busy helping bear hunters register previously registered bait sites and processing watercraft registrations. The girls invite you to stop in and pick up your 2016 licenses and Conservation Stamps.

<http://wgfd.wyo.gov>

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~Critter Spotlight~

Ruffed Grouse

By Mark Zornes a.k.a. Leopold

- **One of two species of "mountain grouse"** found in Wyoming, the other being the "blue" or dusky grouse. Often called "willow grouse" by local hunters, this species is most often associated with moist riparian, willow/aspen/conifer mixed habitats with good understory cover. They are commonly found in second growth aspen stands that have a diversity of understory shrubs and thickets.
- **Found in highest numbers** in Wyoming west of the Continental Divide in mountain foothills up to timberline in some cases. Also found on the east slope of the Winds, in the Absarokas, and the Big-horns. An isolated population of ruffed grouse occur in the Black Hills. There are no ruffed grouse in the Sierra Madres, Snowy Range, or Laramie Range. In southwest Wyoming, ruffies can be found in all appropriate habitats associated with the Uintas, the Bear River Divide, and the Wyoming Range.
- **Ruffed grouse males defend** a very small territory by announcing their presence to rivals and potential mates through a non-vocal display referred to as "drumming." The male usually has a few display logs where he lets others know of his claim through a unique and rapid beating of his wings. The sound is hard to describe- a thumping that starts slow and culminated with impressive speed. People lucky enough to see this display on early spring mornings, report wings are nearly invisible at the end of the display due to the speed they are beat.
- **A favorite among bird hunters**, the ruffie, or partridge as it is known in the east, is often referred to as the **King of Game birds**, and is a particular favorite of the author. Few species provide more thrills in the hunt and provide better table fare than the ruffed grouse.
- **Ruffed grouse are a cyclic species**, commonly spanning a 7-10 year period between population peaks. In Wyoming, females lay a clutch of 9-14 eggs in a depression on the ground. At hatching, young are immediately able to follow the hen.
- **Ruffed grouse forage** on a variety of plant and animal material, primarily feeding on buds, berries, and greenery, such as dandelion greens.